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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3855
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5962
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3656
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3515
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4204
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4147
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1291
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001574

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND SCA/RA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [UN](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: ASHGABAT-BASED UNAMA LIAISON
ESTABLISHED

REF: ASHGABAT 1052

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Peter T. Eckstrom. Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is re-deploying some of its 1,000 staff out of Kabul after the October attack on the UN building. Mr. Asoka Rasphone, who worked for UNAMA for three years in Afghanistan, has now been deployed to Turkmenistan and will continue his UNAMA work from the United Nations Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. He noted that approximately 100 UNAMA employees have been moved from Afghanistan to Dubai, and that UNAMA is considering opening an office in Kuwait and sending more employees to Ashgabat. Nevertheless, UNAMA still has eight regional offices and 16 provincial offices throughout Afghanistan.

¶2. (SBU) In a meeting with Poloff on December 4, Rasphone emphasized that he would continue UNAMA's mission of political outreach, assistance, and coordination of regional cooperation from Ashgabat. However, he would focus more than he had previously on bringing the Central Asian countries into the picture to provide assistance to their southern neighbor. Rasphone spent November traveling to the five Central Asian capitals. He told Poloff that he believed all five countries were interested in helping Afghanistan and had much to offer. His initial suggestions for areas of cooperation were infrastructure development, including railways, highways, electricity lines, and border crossing points, and people-to-people exchanges. Rasphone said he thought the Central Asian countries could help Afghanistan in promoting agriculture, training civil servants, and fighting corruption.

¶3. (C) During the course of the conversation, it became clear that Rasphone knew little about both Turkmenistan and U.S. policy in the region. He seemed surprised to learn that he could not just call a counterpart at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but instead would need to send a diplomatic note to

request a meeting. In addition, he did not know about U.S. Government projects to improve border security, including the opening of three modern border crossing checkpoints since 2006 at Etrek, Imam Nazar, and Farap. He asked questions about U.S. policy on Afghanistan, including why President Obama had chosen to focus on Pakistan as well, and why the U.S. had not tried to include the Central Asian governments in assisting Afghanistan.

14. (C) COMMENT: Rasphone has not been in Central Asia long enough to realize that even though the governments claim they are committed to assisting Afghanistan, converting such claims into concrete action has been a challenge. Turkmenistan does provide some aid to its neighbor, especially to the northern regions (reftel). Still, when it comes to engaging in projects such as developing a new electricity grid, the Turkmen require assurances that the Afghan side will be able to complete its part of the project. Rasphone may have some leverage with the Turkmen Government as he tries to coordinate international donor efforts, because of the Turkmen affinity for working with the UN. However, he will also quickly realize that, although Turkmenistan appears organized on the surface, in areas such as transparency, accountability and planning, its government institutions would make poor models for their Afghan counterparts. END COMMENT.
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